DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 415 CG 005 400

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TITLE	Negative Home Influence and Pupil School Success.
INSTITUTION	American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C.; Florida Univ., Gainesville. Coll. of Education.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
PUB DATE	Mar 70
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 2-6, 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.85
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement, *Elementary School Students, Family Environment, *Family Influence, Family Life, Low Achievers, *Social Development

ABSTRACT

The study was devised to examine the empirical relations between selected home influences and a number of aspects of pupil growth in school, both academic and personal-social. Data was compiled on 559 children, in grades 3 through 6, from a metropolitan area in South Carolina. Data from a concurrent project noted that these were atypical classrooms in that the style of teacher-pupil interaction was relatively indirect and the emotional climate unusually warm. The authors felt that this was unrepresentative, but that it added credibility to the meaning of the data analyzed. Measures used to assess subject matter achievement, personality and creativity included: (1) the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; (2) the Minnesota Test of Creative Thinking; (3) the Dependence-Proneness Scale; (4) the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale; and (5) negative home influence. Results were presented and possible reasons for them discussed. One clear conclusion was that the data offered no support for blanket statements regarding the unfortunate consequences of a variety of home influences. (TL)

Negative Home Influences and Pupil School Success[1]

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One of the widely held beliefs in education is that a number of home influences are likely to handicap the growth of the child in school, and that the teacher should know each pupil well enough to take these into account in working with the child. Data relating various negative influences in the home to the growth of the child are limited, however.

Background of the Study

Nye (1957) and Russell (1957) found that broken homes and unbroken but unhappy homes tended to produce a greater incidence of delinquency, but found no change in other behaviors. Wade (1962) reported no difference in achievement for pupils whose parents both worked versus those with one parent at home, despite higher intelligence for the latter group. Castle (1954) reported institution-reared pupils to be socially less well adjusted in school than children reared at home. Clark and Sommers (1961) found poor pupil social adjustment and low achievement to be associated with interaction patterns in the home which made contradictory demands on the pupil.

Crescimbeni (1964) found significantly decreased achievement for pupils from broken homes. Clausen and Williams (1963) found personality differences

[1]This investigation was supported by Public Health Service Grants, No. 5-R11 MH 01096, 7-R11 MH 02045, and R01 MH 14663-01 from the National Institute of Mental Health.

for pupils from homes from which the father was absent, but employment of the mother made no difference. Moore (1947) and Goldfarb (1943) found institution-reared children slower in langauge development; Goldfarb found the influence of the first three years in an institution had continuing effect even after placement in a family. Only 20 percent of his institution-reared children were at grade level, whereas 87 percent of children placed in foster homes as infants were at grade level.

Children seem to be affected by institution rearing and broken homes, and it is frequently assumed that other home influences, such as chronic illness of the child, or long-term illness or death of a parent or sibling, are also likely to have a negative effect on the growth of the pupil in the classroom. Little data on these questions appear to exist, however.

Problem

The problem is to study the empirical relations between selected home influences and a number of aspects of pupil growth in school, both academic and personal-social.

Procedure

This study was carried out adjunctive to a larger study whose principal focus was the study of the relationships between a number of dimensions of observed teacher-pupil classroom behavior as measured by two systematic observation systems, and a number of measures of pupil growth. Pupil measures were taken fall and spring of the first year and spring of the second year. As a part of that project, each year teachers were asked to report

information they had about home influences on pupils in their classrooms which might be considered to have a negative influence on the growth of the child.

Sample

Data were collected from 23 teachers, concerning 559 pupils, in three elementary schools, grades three through six, in a metropolitan area of central South Carolina. Data from the larger project (Soar, 1966) indicate that these were atypical classrooms in that the style of teacher-pupil interaction was relatively indirect, and the emotional climate in the classrooms unusually warm. These data agree with impressionistic data suggesting that these were schools in which supportive relationships with pupils were seen as important to the educational process, and that pupils were valued as individuals more highly than is sometimes true. While the sample is clearly unrepresentative, it seems possible that its unrepresentativeness may argue for the increased meaning of the data analyzed in this report.

Measures

The measures used were selected to include diverse aspects of the growth of pupils: subject matter achievement, personality, and creativity.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) - The Vocabulary, Reading, Arithmetic Concepts, and Arithmetic Problems subtests of the ITBS were selected for use as measures of achievement. The subtests are long enough to produce adquately reliable scores for individual measures, and the scales are more oriented toward skills than memory for particular facts. (Lindquist and Hieronymus, 1956).

Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (CMAS) - The anxiety measure was adapted by Castaneda, McCandless, and Palermo (1956) from the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale. In addition to the anxiety measure (A), they also developed a scale intended to measure falsification, the "L" scale. Further work by the same authors (Castaneda, Palermo, and McCandless, 1956) showed that the A scale identified pupils who achieved differently in simple and complex learning in a laboratory situation.

The Dependence-Proneness Scale (D-P) - The original work by Flanders, Anderson, and Amidon (1961) included several studies of validity. Pupils who scored high (dependent) took less extreme positions on an opinionnaire than did low scoring pupils; pupils high in dependence-proneness achieved differently in response to different teaching methods; and high and low groups differed significantly in observed dependent behavior in the classroom, such as seeking support and approval from the teacher.

The Minnesota Tests of Creative Thinking - A modification of Guilford's Originality Measure was used (Torrance, 1959 a and b). Although question of the usefulness of this measure has appeared several times in recent literature, the results of these measures in the larger project follow theoretical expectation sufficiently well as to support the validity of the measures. Separate scores were obtained for nonverbal creativity (two tasks pooled), and for the verbal measures of Unusual Uses and Product Improvement.

Negative Home Influence - A precoded recording system was drawn up so that a teacher could simply record a code designating a particular negative influence for a given pupil on a roster for her classroom. It was anticipated that this would make the recording task the work of only a few minutes

for each teacher. Although teachers followed this procedure, they often wrote in extensive additional information. The list of items is shown in Table 1 except for two items (English not spoken in the home, Adopted child), which were dropped because they were never used.

Analysis of Data

Each of the home influences was coded "0" if not present, "1" if present the first year, and "2" if it had preexisted. The second year the same code was used, but an influence was coded "3" if it had been reported both years. In addition, the total number of home influences affecting each child was summed.

The pupil measures were reduced to measures of true gain (Lord, 1963). Then a regressed gain score was calculated to eliminate any remaining relation with initial standing. This process was carried out separately for the data of the first year, and for the two years combined. Finally, the matrix of intercorrelations was calculated between the home influences and the pupil growth measures.

Results

The means and standard deviations are presented in Tables 1 and 2; the intercorrelations in Tables 3 and 4.

For the data of the first year, the highest correlation between any home influence and any measure of pupil growth was .11, which occurred twice. It should be noted that one of these was in the opposite direction from that which would be predicted -- the long-term illness of a sibling was associated

with increased growth in Arithmetic Concepts. The other, between "Unstable home" and Reading was in the expected direction. Of the 143 correlation coefficients calculated, approximately seven would be expected to be significant by chance at the five percent level. Only six were observed to be significant (four negative, two positive). It seems clear that the results for the first year represent only chance relationships.

For the data for two years, the highest correlation was -.15 between "Father away from home" and decreased dependency on the part of the pupil. For the individual home factors, 11 of the 154 intercorrelations were significant at the five percent level or beyond, one at the one percent level. This exceeds chance expectancy slightly.

For the two-year data, the intercorrelations of total number of home influences with the growth of pupils appeared to be somewhat higher; with six of eleven correlations significant at the five percent level or beyond. On the other hand, the highest correlation is -.16, so that less than three percent of the variation in pupil change over a two-year period is associated even with the number of home factors.

Discussion

Several interpretations of these results seem possible. One is that the measures of pupil change were not sufficiently sensitive. They related highly significantly to measures of classroom behavior in the larger study, however, so this seems unlikely.

Another possibility is that the teacher reports of negative home influences may have been unreliable or invalid. The extensive comments of

some teachers suggest that at least they regarded these data as quite important. And it seems likely that these data are as sound as those the typical teacher uses in her own classroom.

Still another possibility may be that these teachers, clearly unusual in the warmth and support they offered children, may indeed have compensated in most cases for the stresses occasional pupils experienced at home, so that the effect was minimized.

The fact that only pupils who remained available for longitudinal study were included in the sample may have eliminated those for whom environmental factors were more extreme. Yet if this selective influence could eliminate the effect of these home influences as completely as would have been necessary to produce these results, the effect would appear to be of doubtful generality.

A final possibility appears to be that children are a hardy lot and that influences of the kinds studied here do not, in fact, have much effect on these aspects of pupil growth.

The one clear conclusion appears to be that these data offer no support for blanket statements of the unfortunate consequences of a variety of home influences.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Negative Home Influences

Home Influences	One Year		Two Years	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D
Orphaned	.000	.000	.004	.085
Continuing illness	.022	.200	.034	.294
Short term serious illness	.013	.140	.020	.184
Parents separated, divorced	.100	.428	.145	.618
One parent dead	.023	.202	.057	.370
Father away from home for military service or work	.027	.201	.057	.339
Both parents working, or the only one in the home working	.210	.553	.403	.914
Long term illness of a parent	.041	.261	.079	.429
Long term illness of a brother or sister	.014	.158	.007	.120
New baby born	.022	.168	.018	.168
Death of a brother or sister	.000	.000	.009	.127
Unstable home	.040	.251	.059	.386
Gross change in family income	.011	.133	.018	.207
Lived with guardian	.000	.000	.011	.146
Harsh home discipline	.004	.085	.000	.000
Number of home influences	.339	.557	.428	.640

N = 559

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Adjusted True Gain Scores

	One Year		Two Years	
	Mean*	S.D.	Mean*	S.D.
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills				
Vocabulary	57.62	4.43	68.49	5.47
Reading	55.35	7.28	66.46	8.94
Arithmetic concepts	56.30	3.17	65.54	4.15
Arithmetic problems	57.11	4.22	67.99	5.57
Arithmetic total	56.57	3.72	66.63	4.92
CMAS				
Anxiety	49.78	5.05	44.55	7.35
Lie	49.22	.92	49.10	1.38
Dependence-Proneness	49.47	2.31	50.38	2.91
Creativity				
Nonverbal	53.42	3.07	53.48	4.07
Product improvement	57.73	3.17	57.52	4.22
Unusual uses	55.93	6.01	60.31	8.30

N = 559

*A constant of 50 is included to eliminate negative scores.

Table 3

Correlations Between First Year Negative Home Influences and First Year Adjusted True Gain

Home Influences	Vocab.	Read.	Arithmetic		
			Con.	Prob.	Total
Orphaned					
Continuing illness	.04	.06	.03	-.07	-.03
Short term serious illness	-.00	-.04	.01	-.06	-.05
Parents separated, divorced	-.04	-.02	-.01	-.04	-.02
One parent dead	.03	.06	-.05	:01	-.04
Father away from home for military service or work	.01	-.04	.02	.00	.02
Both parents working, or the only one in the home working	-.05	.03	-.01	.01	.01
Long term illness of a parent	-.03	-.00	-.09*	-.04	-.08
Long term illness of a brother or sister	.02	.03	.11*	.04	.09*
New baby born	.03	.03	.02	.00	.01
Death of a brother or sister					
Unstable home	-.06	-.11*	-.01	-.04	-.01
Gross change in family income	.07	.08	.04	.02	.03
Lived with guardian					
Harsh home discipline	-.05	-.07	-.06	-.04	-.05
Number of home influences	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.04

N = 559

*p = .05

Table 3 - Extended

CMAS			Creativity		
A	L	D-P	Nonverbal	Prod. Improve.	Unusual Uses
-.01	-.04	-.05	-.07	-.04	.01
.03	.01	.07	.03	-.02	-.08
.05	.03	-.02	-.00	-.03	-.02
-.03	.00	-.04	.04	.04	-.01
-.09*	.02	.03	-.02	.02	-.00
-.06	-.01	-.04	.01	-.01	-.02
.04	-.02	.04	-.02	-.08	-.02
.00	-.03	-.05	.01	-.02	-.01
-.00	.03	-.02	-.01	-.10*	-.07
-.04	.03	-.03	-.04	.01	-.08
-.03	.04	.01	.02	.01	-.01
-.02	-.01	.03	-.02	-.06	-.07
-.04	.01	-.05	-.01	-.06	-.06

Table 4

Correlation Between Negative Home Influences and Adjusted True Gain Over Two Years

Home Influences	Vocab.	Read.	Arithmetic		Total
			Con.	Prob.	
Orphaned	-.03	.02	-.03	.05	.03
Continuing illness	.06	.05	.04	-.01	.02
Short term serious illness	-.02	-.04	.02	-.04	-.03
Parents separated, divorced	-.08	-.04	-.04	-.09*	-.06
One parent dead	.03	.06	.04	-.03	-.01
Father away from home for military service or work	-.07	-.07	-.04	-.05	-.06
Both parents working, or the only one in the home working	-.08	-.03	-.04	-.10*	-.06
Long term illness of parent	-.05	-.07	-.08	-.08	-.08
Long term illness of a brother or sister	.02	.03	-.00	-.02	-.00
New baby born	.04	.05	-.01	.08	.05
Death of a brother or sister	-.09*	-.02	-.11*	-.08	-.08
Unstable home	-.04	-.07	-.05	-.03	-.03
Gross change in family income	.02	.01	.04	.05	.05
Lives with guardian	-.09*	-.05	.03	-.05	-.02
Harsh home discipline					
Number of home influences	-.13**	-.10*	-.08	-.16**	-.11*

N = 559

*p = $\leq$.05

**p = $\leq$.01

Table 4 - Extended

CMAS			Creativity		
A	L	D-P	Nonverbal	Prod. Improve.	Unusual Uses
-.06	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.04
.01	-.03	-.06	-.01	-.04	-.03
.00	-.00	.01	-.0	.04	.07
.06	.06	.05	.01	-.11*	-.09*
.02	.06	-.03	.06	-.05	.00
.06	-.02	-.15**	-.03	-.08	-.06
.07	-.01	-.09*	-.06	.03	.03
.11*	-.03	-.01	.04	-.05	-.06
-.06	.06	.07	.06	.03	.04
.00	.04	.00	.01	.05	-.03
.02	-.02	-.06	.03	-.01	.00
.06	.04	-.08	.01	.02	-.05
.06	.01	.01	.01	.02	-.00
.01	.10*	-.00	.02	-.05	-.05
.13*	.05	-.09*	.02	-.05	-.05

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